

Appln No. 10/660,453
Amdt date January 27, 2010
Reply to Office action of September 29, 2009

REMARKS/ARGUMENTS

Claims 1, 4-12, and 15-24 remain pending in the present application, of which claim 1 is independent. Claims 1, 5-12, and 15 have been amended herein. Claims 2 and 14 have been cancelled without prejudice. Claims 6-11 were withdrawn due to an earlier restriction requirement, and each has been amended herein. Applicants acknowledge with thanks the indication that claims 2, 5, and 19 included allowable subject matter. Applicants respectfully request reconsideration and allowance of claims 1, 4, 6-12, 15-18, and 20-24, in addition to maintaining the allowability of claims 5 and 19.

Claims 1, 4, 12, 14-18, and 20-24 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Japanese Publication No. JP 49-11836 to Shu Koujyu, in view of U.S. Patent No. 5,989,290 to Biedermann et al.

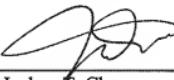
Independent claim 1 has been amended to incorporate the limitations of allowable claim 2, which is now cancelled. As the Examiner indicated on page 3 of the Office action, claim 2 would be allowable if rewritten in independent form, including all of the limitations of the base claim and any intervening claims. Since claim 1 has now been amended to incorporate the limitations of allowable claim 2, Applicants submit that amended claim 1 is now also allowable. Accordingly, Applicants request that the rejection of claim 1 be withdrawn, and that claim 1 be allowed.

Claims 4, 12, 15-18, and 20-24 depend, directly or indirectly, from claim 1, and each incorporates all the terms and limitations of claim 1, in addition to other limitations, which together further patentably distinguish them over the cited references. Please note that prior independent claim 12 is amended to depend from and conform to the claim language of claim 1. Further, as claim 1 is now allowable, previously allowable claims 5 and 19 no longer depend from a rejected base claim. Finally, as generic claim 1 is allowable, pursuant to MPEP § 821.04, Applicants request that claims 6-11, previously withdrawn due to a restriction requirement, and which depend and require all the limitations of independent claim 1, be rejoined and also allowed. Accordingly, Applicants request that the respective rejections of, objections to, and withdrawals of claims 4-12 and 15-24 be withdrawn, and that these claims be allowed.

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In view of the foregoing remarks and arguments, Applicant earnestly solicits a timely issuance of a Notice of Allowance as pertains to all of claims 1, 4-12, and 15-24. If there are any remaining issues that can be addressed over the telephone, the Examiner is cordially invited to call Applicant's attorney at the number listed below.

Respectfully submitted,
CHRISTIE, PARKER & HALE, LLP

By 
Joshua T. Chu
Reg. No. 59,799
626/795-9900

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